

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

OBJECTS:

1. To provide for readers at home and abroad information concerning the life and thought of the British Churches in wartime.
2. To elucidate by news and quotations the spiritual issues at stake in the war.

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THE GERMAN CONFESSIONAL CHURCH NEUTRAL OBSERVER ON ITS STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS

We publish this week a translation of an article on the present position of the German Confessional Church by Dr. Arthur Frey, of Zurich, a very distinguished Continental churchman. He is the author of *Cross and Swastika*, a standard work on the German religious conflict. The article is from the *Swiss Semeur Vaudois*, February 13th, 1943.

We print a verbatim translation of the article, fully realising that some matters raised in it are subjects on which there are legitimate differences of opinion. Behind Dr. Frey's outspoken criticisms of the Confessional Church there is, of course, a long-standing difference between Calvinism and Lutheranism in their attitude to world affairs. It is not for us to take sides in this theological controversy, and it must be remembered that the Lutheran Church of Norway has to its credit what is perhaps the outstanding record of spiritual resistance to Hitler's new order. The fact that we print the article does not mean that we identify ourselves with all its statements. It is, however, full of interest and raises many important points. The translation is as follows:

We do not hear nowadays about the German Confessional Church, nor even about the Evangelical Church in Germany. Does this mean that it is dead? Are they right who say that it exists no longer? As information is so scarce it is necessary to hesitate before giving a judgment.

The Confessional Church Still Lives

We know that the Confessional Church is still alive and that even in the Evangelical Church of Prussia it remains a considerable factor with an important role in ecclesiastical affairs. The proof of this is that the national

churches of South Germany—those which remained "intact"—have established closer relations with the Confessional Church. We learn also that there exists in Prussia a great tension between those who have submitted to the Consistory and those who have refused to submit, a tension which hampers the Lutheran Bishop, Dr. Wurm, of Stuttgart and South Germany, in his efforts to unify the German Evangelical Church. That is proof that the Confessional Church still lives and that it has its part to play.

Those who have had friendly relations with the National German Church would be excluded from the proposed union. Negotiations will be based on a Confessional declaration already drawn up under thirteen headings. When we remember the numerous efforts at union which have failed we cannot look on the present efforts with great optimism, even though we must admit that the war has brought the separate churches closer together, or at least strengthened the desire for reciprocal rapprochement.

The war has affected the Confessional Church more than any other Church. Eighty-five per cent. of its pastors, to-day perhaps 90 per cent., have been mobilised. This has happened for two principal reasons. The first is that the pastors of the Confessional Church are not dependent on recognised ecclesiastical authorities who can intervene for them with the State in order to keep them at the head of their parishes. The second reason is that the majority of the pastors are young and the right age for serving in the army. Neither must we forget the fact that the provisional heads of the Church were imprisoned for some months because they carried on with illegal theological examinations.

NEW CHURCH PROTESTS IN HOLLAND

The story of Church resistance to the new order in Holland is developing and continues to be marked by great courage and by a spirit of co-operation between Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches.

While information at present is scanty, it is clear that both Catholic and Protestant Churches recently issued a joint open letter to Seyss-Inquart. The letter clearly protested against the flagrant injustices being daily committed by the occupying authorities in the Netherlands. The joint protest was followed by a Pastoral letter, which was read in Roman Catholic Churches on February 21st, and there is some reason to think that a similar letter was also read in the Protestant pulpits.

The nature of the Catholic Pastoral letter can be best judged by an attack on it which appeared the next day in the Nazi-dominated paper *Standaard*. In this attack, the Labour chief, Schmidt, described the substance of the letter, from which we take quotations:

"In the Pastoral letter the Catholic Church wants to intercede on behalf of those who are affected by the harshness of the occupying Forces. The Church complains of injustices to the Dutch people and talks about justice, mercy and freedom of conviction. They rise against the shooting of hostages. The Pastoral letter opposes the severe treatment in concentration camps. It complains about youths having been sent to Germany. The letter makes comparisons between our measures and the Gospel and states that the commandment of God stands above worldly might."

The letter concluded (this is taken from another source) with advice to Dutch Christians not to collaborate in carrying out the various injustices and included the following words:

"The individual must be strong and steadfast in the knowledge that he is doing his duty to God and man. The Church does not wish to take sides in a conflict between States and peoples attempting to solve immense problems, but is the guardian of Church principles. It must not fail to proclaim the inviolate word of God, which is to obey Him rather than man."

All these points are answered by Labour leader Schmidt, but some of the answers themselves reveal the weakness of his case, e.g., on the shooting of hostages, he said that hostages have to atone only for assaults on the German military, while for crimes against

members of the Dutch Nazi party no hostages are shot, because Mussert has said that Dutch blood shall not atone for the shedding of Dutch blood.

The paper *Het Volk* on February 26th attacked the Churches directly for their attitude. "Not British propaganda in the first place," it said, "but our own treacherous intellectuals and wailing clergy are held responsible for this new mentality and for abandoning the people to those they described as their greatest enemy."

"Churchmen and bad shepherds must disappear first," the article continues. "That is the demand of the moment, however difficult it may be to write and advocate it. The Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, speculating on their inviolability, have again interfered in matters which are only the concern of worldly authorities. Even if one should accept the letter to the Reichskommissar, which was read with pathos from the pulpits, expressing things which have a basis of truth, it cannot be denied that it would be far more honest and effective if these matters were settled between four walls. The reading of such statements means that thousands of people are encouraged to oppose the legal authorities."

"When the Synod and Episcopate show the courage to protest against the Labour Service, the execution of hostages, labour in Germany and the introduction of forced labour for the sons of those who are morally responsible for the disasters brought upon this country, then the time has come for us to say that we will no longer allow our people to acknowledge these hypocrites as leaders."

ANGLICAN AND FREE CHURCH TRIBUTES TO CARDINAL HINSLEY

On the day of Cardinal Hinsley's death, tributes to his memory were paid by the Archbishop of Canterbury and by Dr. J. S. Whale, Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council.

Dr. Temple said: "The death of Cardinal Hinsley involved a great loss to all who wish to see the witness of Christianity given effectively to our people. He was a most devoted citizen of his country and the note of patriotism in his speeches was always clear and strong, but he was convinced that his best service to his country was to help it to follow faithfully that natural law which is the law of God for His creation. In this he was eager to co-operate with other Christians, whether or not they were of his communion. He has served nobly the cause

of co-operation in Christian witness of this kind. All whose aspirations are set upon a Christian Britain mourn his loss ; many of us also mourn a most kindly and warm-hearted friend."

Dr. J. S. Whale, Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council: "No one could meet and talk with Cardinal Hinsley without realising why he was so notable a leader of the Roman Church in this country ; there was a warm humanity, a moral directness, a fine Christian simplicity about him, which made itself felt far beyond the bounds of his own communion, especially in recent years. As far as it was possible, he co-operated willingly with other Christian forces in the country, and I never met him without feeling that the desire to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly was dominant in his being. His sympathies were truly Catholic, springing as they did out of reverence for that divine law which knows no bounds or frontiers, and in which alone men find peace. For example, in private as well as in public, he spoke with a deep moral passion against persecution, especially the ghastly persecution of the Jews in Europe at this time. Again, I remember his telling me at the Albert Hall Pageant, fifteen months ago, how he had just been visiting some Italian prisoners, and how his heart had gone out to them because of the way in which their ignorance had been exploited in their own country ; they have been grievously misled, he said. It was this sensitiveness to the tragedy of the human situation which made the Cardinal not only a Good Shepherd of the flock, but also a prophet of the righteousness and mercy of God. Those who are heirs of a different ecclesiastical tradition from his own thank God for every remembrance of him."

MADAME CHIANG KAI-SHEK AND POST-WAR REQUIREMENTS

Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, as well known as a Christian leader as she is for her part in China's military conflict, addressed a mass gathering in New York on Tuesday, March 2nd. After a stirring account of China's long struggle for freedom, Madame Chiang turned to the post-war period and gave her views as to the spirit in which the United Nations should face their problems. She said:—

"All nations, great and small, must have equal opportunity of development. Those who are stronger and more advanced should consider their strength as a trust to be used

to help the weaker nations to fit themselves for full self-government and not to exploit them. Exploitation is spiritually as degrading to the exploiter as to the exploited.

"Then, too, there must be no bitterness in the reconstructed world. No matter what we have undergone and suffered, we must try to forgive those who injured us and remember only the lesson gained thereby.

"The teachings of Christ radiate ideas for the elevation of souls and intellectual capacities far above the common passions of hate and degradation. He taught us to help our less fortunate fellow-beings, to work and strive for their betterment without ever deceiving ourselves and others by pretending that tragedy and ugliness do not exist. He taught us to hate the evil in men, but not men themselves.

"Finally, in order that this war may indeed be the war to end all wars in all ages, and that nations, great and small alike, may be allowed to live and let live in peace, security and freedom in the generations to come, co-operation in the true and highest sense of the word must be practised. I have no doubt that the truly great leaders of the United Nations, those men with vision and forethought, are working toward the crystallisation of this ideal, yet they, too, would be impotent if you and I do not give our all toward making it a reality. . . .

"Selfishness and complacency in the past have made us pay dearly in terms of human misery and suffering. While it may be difficult for us not to feel bitterness for the injuries we have suffered at the hands of the aggressors, let us remember that recrimination and hatred will lead us nowhere. We should use our energy to better purpose so that every nation will be enabled to use its native genius and energy for the reconstruction of a permanently progressive world with all nations participating on an equitable and just basis. The goal of our common struggle at the conclusion of this war should be to shape the future so that 'this whole world must be thought of as one great State common to gods and men.'"

PRIME MINISTER ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In the course of his broadcast on March 21st, Mr. Churchill said: "There is another element which should never be banished from our system of education. Here we have freedom of thought as well as freedom of conscience. Here we have been the pioneers of religious toleration. But side by side with

all this has been the fact that religion has been a rock in the life and character of the British people upon which they have built their hopes and cast their cares. This fundamental element must never be taken from our schools, and I rejoice to learn of the enormous progress which is being made among all religious bodies in freeing themselves from sectarian jealousies and feuds while preserving fervently the tenets of their own faith."

TESTAMENTS IN LIFEBOAT EQUIPMENT

"From now on no man set adrift in a lifeboat or raft from a sinking American merchantman will be without a New Testament. It will not be left to chance that someone has a copy in his pocket. Testaments wrapped carefully in waterproof containers will hereafter be regular equipment of both boats and rafts on all merchant ships. They will bear the insignia of the merchant marine.

"Suppose Sergeant John Bartek, who was on Captain Rickenbacker's raft, had not happened to have had his New Testament with him during those three fateful weeks in the South Pacific? This question has undoubtedly occurred to many Bible-loving people, for, according to the sergeant's testimony when speaking at a party for service men in Buffalo, N.Y., he said: 'Without the Bible we might have given up. But every so often we'd run across a passage that would force hope back into us like a dry sponge in a basin of water.' This forceful testimony on the part of the young radio engineer confirmed the conviction of the officers of the American Bible Society that something should be done to make the New Testament available to all shipwrecked men on lifeboats and rafts."—*The Churchman* (U.S.A.), March 1st, 1943.

THE CIVIL CODE OF THE NAZI COMMUNITY

The first draft of a new German Civil Code, giving its basic rules and principles, has been published and was announced recently by the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. The object of this Code is to present the fundamental principles of the life of the community, according to the National-Socialist point of view.

The Code begins: "The welfare of the German people is the supreme law." It

thus begins with open admission that moral and legal questions are to be judged purely in the setting of German welfare. There is an implied rejection of those universal rights of men which Bishop von Preysing of Berlin recently pronounced to be essential to true well-being.

Some of the clauses of the Code are in themselves unexceptionable, but often what seems an innocent assertion is seen to imply something far removed from the traditional Christian point of view. Thus marriage (clause 3) is said to be "the foundation of the life of the people's community" and to "enjoy the special protection of the law." Children are said to be "the most precious possession of the German people's community." A clause quickly follows, however, by which the parents are obliged to educate their children in "the National-Socialist spirit," while clause 6 states "No slur attaches to the natural child. It has the same claims as other *Volksgenossen*."

It is interesting to notice clause 13, which states that "anyone undertaking an obligation must consider himself in honour bound to fulfil it even in difficult circumstances; the observation of contracts is the basis of all legal transactions." It is reasonable to guess that within the limits of the German frontiers the Nazis are already discovering that some stability is essential for any organised life; hence their insistence on the observation of contracts. Nothing is said, of course, about the obligation to observe contracts made between states.

The judge is said to pronounce his decision in all cases "according to his own free conviction, based on his consideration of all the circumstances." But the following words must be noted: "according to his interpretation of the law on the basis of the National-Socialist ideology." Thus the door is open for the highest officials of the law to give their judgment according to a particular philosophy of life which clearly takes precedence over the moral law.

A postscript points out that the regulations do not apply to members of the Reich of alien blood "if it is clear that they are intended only for members of the Reich of German blood." Similarly aliens are to be dealt with "according to the principles of international law recognised by the Greater German Reich."